

THE MOVE TO THE FARM IN 1916

This was the first time that my mother and father had lived on their own place since they left their claims in New Mexico in 1910.

This was the dream of many an old cowboy -- to have his own place, his own horses and cattle. We had about two hundred cows on the place and on adjoining pasture that was rented. My father farmed about one hundred acres the first year and thereafter about one hundred and sixty acres. He was lucky, times were good and prices for farm products were good. He raised maize, kaffir corn, and corn. We raised potatoes, watermelons, and cantaloupes. One time my father took a load of watermelons and cantaloupes to Clayton to sell. He parked his wagon on the street and before noon he had sold out. He said he had never before had so much cash money. His pockets were full of silver and bills.

One of his old cowboy friends, Dode Dixon, came by and laughed at him because many cowboys shunned the farming business. My father said, "I had just as soon sell a watermelon as a beef steer." He pulled out of his pockets two handfuls of money and said, "See here, Dode."

Here I learned to plow as well as ride a horse. When I was about nine years old, I and some of my friends were trying to learn how to smoke. As we had no tobacco, we used corn silks and cedar bark with newspaper for cigarette paper. One day my father was gone to the field to plow and I went out to the barn and thought I would practice smoking. With a big wad of cedar bark and newspaper, I had fashioned a cigar. I had lit it up and was puffing away. My father

stuck his head in the door (he had smelled the smoke) saying, "Hello, old smoker." He reached over and took a line from a set of harness. He pretty well fanned me out and then he told me, "Son, I don't give a damn for you smoking, but I don't want you to burn my barn down." It was pretty good psychology, I never learned to smoke. If he had whipped me for smoking, perhaps I would have acquired the habit.

At different times, my father would go back to the ranch to help Mr. Lane on the ranch. He did this for several years and after paying him, Mr. Lane gave him a fine cowhorse. He was a big black bald-faced horse, part Arabian. Mr. Lane had a pure white Arabian stallion. My father had several mares and we acquired several of this horse's colts, among which were two paint colts. One was a bay horse colt that my father had broke and then gave him to me. I called him Monte. He was a big, powerful horse, nothing like the spindly things they raise now for saddle horses. As I mentioned before, some of these crossbred animals were superior. This horse was big, strong, and active. He could run a hundred yards or two miles. After I had acquired greyhounds and ran coyotes, many is the time that I would outrun the dogs on this horse and turn the coyote back. On one such occasion, I was running a coyote in a strange pasture where I had not been before. I ran up the side of a sand hill and on the other side was a jumpoff of about fifteen feet straight down. The horse could not stop, so we both rolled down to the bottom. By the time we got the sand out of our eyes and were ready to go again, the coyote had disappeared.

When I was eight years old, my father bought me a pony to ride to school. In the fall of 1916, I started to school at Wheelless in the second grade. I went there two years, then another school district was formed, the Liberty district. The school house

was on a section that joined the one where we lived.

One summer we helped Mr. Lane brand his calves. Heretofore, there had been only steers on the ranch. They were put in a pen, and then in a chute to work and brand. We had branded our calves, but they were in a pen. These cattle were in a big pasture, there was no pen. The chuckwagon was camped near a windmill. A roundup was made -- there were about fifteen men around. A part of them held the herd and about a half dozen of the them went to the wagon and each one got a sack. In about thirty minutes they had piled up quite a pile of cowchips. The herd was then driven near, and the branding started. All of the calves were caught around the neck, as in the loose herd, the ropers could not get near enough to heel the calves.

My father had raised corn one year and took a wagon load to town to sell. He was going to bring back a load of coal to use for cooking and heating. He also had a crate with four turkeys to sell in it (my mother had raised them). He weighed and unloaded his corn, sold his turkeys and then loaded up with coal. When he went to pay for the coal, the check he had for the corn was not enough to pay for the coal. He had to use some of the turkey money to finish paying for the coal. As he drove home thinking of this deal, he decided something was wrong. That winter we burned the coal along with several tons of ear corn. He bought no more coal.

The summer of 1917 was the first time that I had ever seen Raymond Thatcher. He came to our place on horseback with Mr. Lane when he was inspecting the ranch. Later Mr. Thatcher bought the ranch.

Mr. Thatcher would ride a horse all over the ranch, even though he had been accustomed to staying in his office in the First National Bank of Pueblo, Colorado. He loved livestock -- horses and cattle -- raising both for years. His brother, John Thatcher,

his father, and his uncles had long been interested in the livestock and other businesses in Colorado. They were pioneers in the development of early Colorado. Being in the banking business for years, they had helped the deserving people in all kinds of businesses. A friend of mine in Lamar told me that his father was a business man in Lamar before 1900 and that down through the years, he had gone broke three times. Each time, the Thatchers had helped him start again.

Anyone that has ridden a horse knows that it can be quite an experience, if you are not accustomed to riding. I have seen Mr. Thatcher ride for several days and not complain about the situation.

In the fall of 1917 was the first time that I had ever seen my Uncle Sully, my father's brother. He came to our place one evening and stayed the night with us. At the time, he was working for Mr. Lane. After selling the Oklahoma ranch to Mr. Thatcher, Mr. Lane had gone to southwest Texas and had bought a large ranch. He had hired Uncle Sully to run it for him. He had sent Sully to Oklahoma to get his horses that were left at the ranch. He drove the horses to Texline and shipped the horses to Texas, returning with them to Mr. Lane's ranch.

In 1918, my father bought a Model T Ford touring car. This was the first automobile he had ever operated. In the summer of 1918, Grandfather L. E. Ikard, Grandfather Burton, and my Aunt Mildred Ikard (my father's youngest sister) all came to visit us.

After a time, Grandpa Burton went back to Farwell. The rest of us got in the Model T and drove to Pueblo, Colorado. Grandpa Ikard lived in Pueblo with his three daughters, Belle, May, and Floyd. They had jobs in and around Pueblo.

Uncle Sully met us at Raton, New Mexico. He came up from south Texas on the train and rode to Pueblo with us. We visited for several days, then Uncle

Sully, Aunt Mildred, my father, my mother, and I drove on to Denver and vacationed for several days. The greatest attraction for me was the museum, I shall never forget it.

Uncle Sully and Aunt Mildred returned on the train to their homes. We returned to Oklahoma by way of the Arkansas Valley to Lamar, Springfield, and Boise City. Going down the valley it was a dusty trip, no pavement, just dry dirt roads.

One afternoon we left Lamar going south. About two o'clock, it began to rain and soon became very muddy. We put the chains on the car and went on, most of the way in low gear. There were no graded roads, just ruts to follow. Each time we met a car, we would have to stop and shovel off the side of the rut so we could pull out to let the car by. There were no chains on the front wheels and they would not climb out of the ruts because it was so slick.

This road crossed Butte Creek on the dam at Two Butte's, there was no bridge. By this time the rain had stopped, and we "dusted" on home getting there about midnight. This was our first "touring" vacation.

By this time, we were into, or getting into, World War I. Later in 1918, Uncle Sully joined the Texas Rangers to help with the war effort. He was in the Rangers about two years. My father was deferred since he was a farmer.

Sometime in 1919, Mr. Lane passed away. He did not recover from a heart attack. My father had bought the section of land where we lived from Mr. Lane. There was no written contract. This created problems, as will be explained later.

The winter of 1918-1919 was very severe, as has been stated before. It was extremely hard on livestock. The influenza epidemic hit the human population something fierce. All three of us were sick at the same time. Mr. Henry Moore, a neighbor,

came twice a day to wait on us. His wife and son were in bed with the flu also. For some reason, he was immune and did not have the flu. We were visited once by Dr. Oliver from Boise City. The fourth day after he went to bed with the flu, my father got up and went to the OTO ranch and started with Bill Clark and his men to drive a herd to Guymon, Oklahoma, some seventy-five miles from the ranch.

It was late in October and the weather had begun to turn cold. My father was lucky that he did not have a relapse, since he was weak from the fever he had with the flu. To follow a herd all day and stand guard a third of the night was a job for a well man. As they passed through Boise City, he tried to think what he could get that would be good for him on the cattle drive. He thought of apples, oranges, and other fruits, but he settled on onions. He bought a sack of onions, put several in his pockets, and placed the others in the chuckwagon. He said he ate these onions for two days and by the time they reached Guymon, he had regained his strength. He said, "I didn't know the flu would kill anybody, or it might have got me."

We had the flu early in the winter and got over it before the snow got deep. During November, December, and January the snow was a foot deep on the level. The sun would come out for several days and melt some of the snow. Then it would snow again. The week before Christmas, there were four open graves at Wheelless at the same time. The ground was frozen hard. Men had to build huge fires and thaw out the ground before they could dig the graves.

The spring of 1919, my father sold all of his cows except the ones we were milking. He sold these cows for \$100 each. He was lucky, in 1921 the same kind of cows sold for \$20. The four years we lived on the farm, we milked from ten to fifteen cows and sold the cream. Cream was a good price. The cows we

milked were Jersey, Shorthorn, Durham, and crossbreeds. At one time, my father purchased two Durham cows and two coming three-year-old heifers. The cows were top producers. The heifers had their calves in the spring and he thought they would be dandys. They had evidently been raised on a bucket by hand. He had noticed that after a few days, neither of them seemed to give much milk. With the calves kept away from them, this seemed odd. He went out early one morning and noticed one of them lying down sucking herself. This he had never seen before and he had been around cattle all of his life. Then he discovered the other one was doing the same thing. He put halters on both of them, put a rope around their bodies just behind their shoulders, tied a stick to the rope, passed the rope up between their forelegs, and fastened it to the halters. With this arrangement, they could not bend their heads far enough back to carry on their habit. This did serve the purpose and immediately they started having more milk. They were turned out in the pasture during the day and were penned up at night. He looked out one day about noon, and they were standing end-to-end sucking each other. This was too much for a cowboy and the next cow trader that came along got a bargain in the two Durham heifers. However, if you read your dairy textbook, you will find that many heavy producers need to be milked at least three times a day.

